

# Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve Work Group Meeting Notes

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Department of Ecology, Bellingham, WA

Prepared By: Dennis Clark, Betty Bookheim & Kyle Murphy

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**Participants:** Kyle Murphy, Betty Bookheim, Dennis Clark (Washington State Department of Natural Resources); Michael Kyte (Biologist consultant); Chris Fairbanks, Bert Rubash, Marie Hitchman (Beach Watchers); Steve Irving (Audubon Society); Maddie Foutch, Heather Trim (People for Puget Sound); Josh Wilund, Kathryn Mitchell (Alcoa Intalco); Tim Johnson (ConocoPhillips); Fred Felleman (Friends of the Earth); April Markiewicz (WWU); Wendy Steffensen (RE Sources for a Sustainable Community); Barry Wenger (Retired Washington State Department of Ecology); Pete Sim (BP); Oliver Grah (Nooksack Tribe); Eric Grossman (USGS); Brendan Brokes (WDFW); Wayne Landis (WWU); Skip Sahlin (SSA Marine Inc.); Ted Morris (Birch Bay State Park); Kyle Loring (Friends of the San Juans).

## 1. Welcome and Introduction

Meeting started with introductions of the Work Group attendees

DNR will facilitate meetings— all agree

Kyle Murphy (DNR) reviewed purpose of meeting:

- Establish the process for forming the reserve Implementation Committee.
- Updates on recent activities related to the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserves
- Discuss/Strategize on future monitoring, restoration, research and outreach plans.

## 2. Implementation Committee Discussion

Page 55 (Coordination with Community Groups) of Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve Management Plan describes the purpose of the Implementation Committee.

Participants reviewed “Draft Implementation Committee Focus & Participation” handout provided by DNR.

There was discussion about the Puget Sound Partnership’s participation in other reserve committees and whether they had the resources to participate in the Implementation Committee. DNR has reached out to the Partnership in relation to this and other reserve committees. They have participated in Protection Island, Smith & Minor Island and Nisqually Reach planning

committees to varying degrees. They have been invited to participate on all the implementation committees. It is in the works to further encourage Partnership participation.

There was a suggestion that multiple stakeholders from different focus areas, such as environmental groups, tribes, and industry would be appropriate for the Implementation Committee. Also suggested to integrate monitoring in the reserve with larger Puget Sound Ecosystem Monitoring Program (PSEMP) and included in future Action Agenda updates.

There was a question clarifying if the role of the Implementation Committee was to address the “Coordination with Community Groups” section of the management plan (page 55). DNR confirmed that is the intention. DNR believes that bringing the various stakeholders together in a committee setting will help facilitate partnerships to support research, monitoring, restoration, and education within the reserve. Additionally, this approach might facilitate the pooling of resources towards management actions of common interest. A comment was made that a lot of work towards coordination and partnerships can be done remotely, or one-on-one, but bringing people together at quarterly meetings would likely lead to collaborations that might not otherwise occur.

Several suggestions related to the dissemination of reserve-related information, data, reports, presentation and public involvement opportunities to committee members and stakeholders. DNR indicated an interest in working with the committee to identify potential mechanisms for achieving this. In the near term, DNR will use the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve webpage ([http://www.dnr.wa.gov/ResearchScience/Topics/AquaticHabitats/Pages/aqr\\_rsve\\_cherry\\_point.aspx](http://www.dnr.wa.gov/ResearchScience/Topics/AquaticHabitats/Pages/aqr_rsve_cherry_point.aspx)) to make this type of information available. In addition, there was interest from the group to have archived materials that were used during the planning process to be made available on the website. DNR indicated the reserve webpages are being updated to reflect the move from planning to implementation, and the archived planning related documents will be available on the website in the future.

There were questions related to the level of resources DNR would commit to the Implementation Committee and management of the reserve. DNR has stepped up commitments recently, with three full-time staff now dedicated to the Aquatic Reserves Program. DNR also receives small carryover funding for monitoring. In addition, this year the legislature provided Jobs Now Act of 2012 funding for reserves to do a lot of baseline monitoring and beach cleanup. DNR is committed to supporting the Implementation Committee with meetings every three or four months, if necessary, and facilitation of electronic communication between meetings as needed.

Suggestions for the Implementation Committee tasks included:

- Developing task specific work plan, based on the management actions identified in the plan.
- Developing a database or system to track plan implementation.
- Facilitating the dissemination of Cherry Point related information, such as permit comment periods and related planning processes.

DNR indicated an interest in pursuing these types of activities with the Implementation Committee. In relation to related permit and planning process, DNR conveyed caution that this

committee isn't intended to duplicate existing permitting and planning processes, but that disseminating information about where stakeholders and partners can learn more about and become involved in other processes related to Cherry Point could certainly fit into the focus of this group.

There was a question about the role the Implementation Committee in coordinating research in the reserve. DNR indicated that coordination of research, monitoring, restoration and education are areas where DNR would greatly benefit from committee input.

There was lengthy discussion about who should participate in the committee. Suggestions included USGS, Ecology staff heading the vessel traffic study, other various groups in Ecology, Tribes, and adjacent homeowners associations and groups. Birch Bay State Park staff identified several stakeholder groups adjacent to the park that could be reached out to for participation, or included in a listserv.

**SUMMARY:** There was broad indication that the work group thought moving forward with an implementation committee to work with DNR on coordination of research, monitoring, restoration and education would be beneficial to the management of the Aquatic Reserve. There was broad interest from attendees in continuing to be involved in this process.

**NEXT ACTIONS FOR DNR:** DNR will pursue outreach to additional stakeholders that were identified as potential committee members and ensure that appropriate representation is included on the committee. DNR will also investigate the possibility of developing a listserv or some other method for quickly and easily disseminating information. DNR will also continue to seek feedback on specific areas of focus for the implementation committee.

### **3. Recent Activities in the Reserve**

#### **Cherry Point Beach Walks – Michael Kyte**

Michael Kyte provided a [presentation on the annual Cherry Point beach walk surveys](#). The purpose is qualitative and systematic inspection of key features along the Cherry Point shoreline. These walks are part of a long-term monitoring program including aerial photos every four years (2012 is 7<sup>th</sup> photography event). This year's beach walk occurred on June 4-5. Features surveyed include landslides, condition of foreshore, anthropogenic effects, beach level, and sediment transport, invasive species, habitat distribution and conditions, flora and fauna distributions. Key points presented included:

- *Sargassum* is so far the only biologically significant invasive plant; Cherry Point is thus far the only place in Puget Sound where it is found intertidal (usually, it is only subtidal).
- Beach debris and creosote are present along the beach and addressing these issues would be beneficial.
- Previous beach spawning forage fish surveys indicated spawning occurs at various locations along the beach. Additional surveys are needed to bring this dataset up to date.
- There is very active sediment movement along the beach, with several high-quality feeder bluffs providing large amounts of sediment to the system. Although there are a small number of impediments to sediment transport, overall there appears to be no long-term reduction in sediment budget along the reach.

- Recreation clam harvest continues to affect the area. Large pits created by the removal of cobble for clam harvesting may have facilitated the invasion of *Sargassum* into the intertidal environment.

### **Herring Validation Report**

Kyle Murphy, DNR Aquatic Reserves Program Manager mentioned that Ecology's [Final Report on Pacific Herring Test Development and Validation](#) is complete and available online. Ecology staff have indicated they are willing and interested in providing a presentation on this report at a future committee meeting.

Kyle also pointed out that the test development and validation detailed in the report were one of the high priority management actions identified in the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve Management Plan.

### **Nitrogen Tank December 2011 Incident and Response**

Dennis Clark, DNR Assistant Division Manager with the Orca Straits District, provided a brief update on the recent incident involving the nitrogen reactor tank displaced from a barge and coming to rest in 50 feet of water. The take-home message from this presentation was that there doesn't appear to be any environmental damage from the tank impacting the seafloor. There were questions regarding the approval process for using the barge landing at Gulf Road. DNR pointed out the barge landing site is on private tidelands and therefore would not require a DNR approval. DNR also does not authorize or track vessel traffic in the aquatic reserves.

### **Seafloor mapping/wave dynamics – Eric Grossman, USGS**

Eric provided a [detailed presentation](#) on the work that U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) does in Puget Sound related to sediment transport and habitat inventory. Eric's presentation will be made available on DNR's website.

USGS utilizes various methods, including multibeam bathymetry and LIDAR to map submerged habitats. This work provides information regarding habitat types, sediment movement and long term changes in nearshore sediment structure and dynamics.

Eric mentioned that he would be interested in using the Implementation Committee to answer questions/frame questions for future studies in the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve. He also mentioned the availability of a "green laser", which can penetrate the water down to 5 to 10 meters in this area. There was strong support from the work group for continuing to work with USGS on this possibility.

## **4. Future Plans**

Kyle Murphy, DNR Aquatic Reserves Program Manager discussed several projects DNR is currently working on in the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve and throughout the aquatic reserves network, including:

- Developing a baseline monitoring network for all reserves, similar to those in National Marine Sanctuaries. Presently other projects DNR has done in aquatic reserves incorporate Puget Sound-wide protocols and are capable of being incorporated into state-wide databases (for example, forage fish spawning beaches [WDFW] and eelgrass

surveys [PSEMP and DNR Submerged Vegetation Monitoring Program]). DNR would like to work with the Implementation Committee at Cherry Point on the other aquatic reserve implementation committees to develop such a network.

- \$750,000 in Jobs Now Act funding for reserves. This money will use the Puget Sound Corps program to conduct baseline monitoring in all reserves. This project will be funded through June of 2013 with a possible extension through June of 2015. Monitoring will include the following:
  - Monthly beach spawning forage fish surveys using WDFW protocols.
  - Eelgrass monitoring through Seagrass Net.
  - Water quality monitoring through Sound Citizen monitoring network.
  - Sediment sample archival for potential natural resource damage assessment.
  - Possible monitoring projects include coastal observation and seabird survey team (COASST) seabird surveys and MusselWatch monitoring.
- In addition to the above surveys, DNR will conduct monthly beach cleanup and creosote identification and removal in cooperation with DNR's creosote removal program.
- DNR will also work with reserve implementation committees and other partners to develop and install educational signage for the reserves. Funding and Puget Sound Corps support may also be available to assist with partner-led activities.
- DNR will be contacting partners and adjacent landowners/managers to facilitate appropriate beach access for monitoring and beach cleanup and other logistical support needs.

There was a lengthy discussion regarding the lack of acoustic trawl surveys (AT) for herring in 2010 and 2012. DNR funded this survey in 2011 at a total cost of \$8,335. The survey requires two boats and a minimum of 200 "running ripe" fish to achieve a sufficient sample size. It was recommended that a meaningful herring monitoring program requires surveys throughout Puget Sound for comparison, so funding a continued survey just at Cherry Point might not be sufficient. WDFW did indicate that the herring spawn surveys continue every year. This type of survey, however, doesn't provide data on age composition of the spawning population. Preliminary numbers for the population size this year are 1100 tons based on the spawning survey.

It was pointed out that herring are one of the indicators the Puget Sound Partnership will be using to track the success of Puget Sound recovery. This suggests that continued monitoring of the Cherry Point herring stock as well as stocks throughout Puget Sound is necessary.

## **5. Gateway Pacific Terminal Update**

DNR briefly provided information on the SEPA/NEPA environmental scoping process underway for the Gateway Pacific Terminal (GPT) proposal. DNR also reiterated that the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve Implementation Committee would not be duplicating the environmental review processes focused on GPT that are underway, but would continue to provide information on how stakeholders can learn more and become involved in those public processes.